

# NewsRelease

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## **NASA LANGLEY WORKERS TO HELP HONOR WOMEN IN AVIATION**

Employees from NASA's Langley Research Center in Hampton, Va., will help North Carolina celebrate almost 100 years of women in aviation.

NASA Langley researchers and technicians will participate March 14-15 in "Women in Aviation," a Women's History Month celebration sponsored by the First Flight Centennial at the National Park Service's Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kill Devil Hills, N.C.

A half dozen inspiring NASA women and Astronaut William McArthur, a North Carolina native who has flown on three Space Shuttle missions, will be on hand to share more about their roles in aerospace technology and development.

But it's not just women in NASA who recognize their gender's role in advancing aviation. One NASA Langley employee, an engineer who specializes in fracture mechanics analysis, has created a special kite that features the faces of seven women aviators.

"I was down on the Outer Banks in 1998 or '99 and I saw a t-shirt for "Women Fly," a non-profit organization. I thought that was a neat kite subject," said Charlie Dunton, who has been building kites since 1979. "There's a style of kite called the 'seven sisters,' which is seven hexagons linked together. I needed seven women in aviation. I knew about Amelia Earhart, aviation pioneer from the 1930's, and Sally Ride, the first female woman in space. From there I had a computer and the Internet and I found a whole wealth of information."

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Dunton wanted to include women from the past to the present. He decided to feature not only Earhart and Ride, but also Eileen Collins, the first woman Shuttle pilot and commander; Patty Wagstaff, a well-known aerobatic pilot who was the first woman to win the U.S. National Aerobatic Championship; Jackie Cochran, who commanded the WASPs in World War II and was the first woman to break the sound barrier; Bessie Coleman, a barnstormer who was the first African-American to earn a pilot's license; and Harriete Quimby, the first American woman to earn a pilot's license and the first woman to solo the English Channel.

Once the research and design were finished, Dunton estimates it took him about 200-250 hours to complete the kite. "I sewed different colors of nylon stacked on top of each other to create the women's faces," said Dunton. "I stitch each hexagon individually, then I cut away the layers to reveal the design of each women's face. I sew the designs onto backing and stitch them together to create the finished kite."

Dunton's kite, which has been successfully flown, will be on display along with special NASA exhibits that honor women's contributions to the mission of NASA. Those contributions date back to the Agency's predecessor, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA).

A number of NASA women pioneers are highlighted, including the first female astronauts. The exhibit also gives examples of how women today contribute to the future of aviation and space as engineers, researchers, scientists, technicians, pilots, astronauts and senior-level managers.

NASA volunteers will also give visitors the opportunity and materials to make a small paper kite and fly it.